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# Speeches Honoring Abraham Lincoln

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## LINCOLN

At this season of the year many addresses on Lincoln are being made and in many of them only a small part of the address is devoted to Lincoln the remainder and greater part being devoted to a discussion of other subjects, usually political. In the short time I shall occupy I will not digress to other subjects. On one occasion Goldsmith suggested to Samuel Johnson that the maximum membership of the famous club to which they belonged should be increased and more members taken in because, said Goldsmith, we have traveled over each others minds, to which Johnson, not pleased, retorted sir: you have not traveled over my mind. As a subject for discussion and writing Lincoln seems inexhaustible. Beginning with a number of campaign biographies when he was nominated for president in 1860 there has been a constantly increasing stream of biographies and books about Abraham Lincoln, numbering in all more than 5000 books and the number of magazine articles and pamphlets about Lincoln are without number. His name and memory have been memorialized in every imaginable way. The recently completed tunnel under the Hudson river connecting New York and New Jersey dedicated December 21, 1937, passing 75 feet under the river and costing \$37,000,000.00 was named for the poor boy born in the humble log cabin now enclosed in a beautiful granite building in La Rue County, Kentucky on February 12, 1809. The Lincoln highway crossing the United States from coast to coast, 3400 miles long is the longest in all the world. Who can tell how many cities, towns, townships, counties, buildings, hotels, business concerns, etc. are named for Lincoln. The Lincoln Memorial building in Washington is, perhaps, the most beautiful memorial in this country. Think of



that pitifully small humble cabin in which Lincoln's life began and the Lincoln Memorial Building at the end of that life and honoring the man of whom Henry Watterson said that considering his ancestry, educational opportunities and early environment we would expect his life to have been one of degradation. Lord Roseberry said that Burns was a miracle and that Shakespeare was a miracle, and may we not also justly and fairly say that Lincoln was a miracle. You all know of what humble unlettered parentage he came; of his attendance at the rude primitive "blab" schools he attended, his schooling covering about a year; of the privations and hardships of his early life. Shortly after his nomination for the Presidency, he was asked to furnish data for a history of his life. His answer was that it was a great piece of folly to attempt to write anything about himself or his early life and that it could all be condensed in a single sentence and that sentence could be found in Gray's Elegy: "The short and simple annals of the poor." The pure white fame of Lincoln is world wide. The children in China and Japan know and are taught the story of Abraham Lincoln. There are more than 40 bronze statues of Lincoln in this and foreign countries. How prophetic were the words of Stanton when Lincoln expired: "Now he belongs to the ages." And yet in how short a time has his fame grown. I made an address on Lincoln before this club on February 13, 1923, and again on February 12, 1924, and in this last talk I said there were several men then living in our city who had seen Abraham Lincoln in life. If I am not mistaken they have all passed on, I heard Capt. E. R. McKee tell an affecting story of Lincoln and his kindness to a wounded animal. I now know but one man who saw Lincoln. Dr. Iddings of Cleveland now almost 90 years



of age whose father lived where the Cleveland Trust Company building now stands at the corner of 9th St. and Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, and who as a boy saw Lincoln as he was going to Washington to be inaugurated and later saw Lincoln's body as it was being taken back to Springfield, Ill. for burial. At the end of the third ballot taken in that wildly exciting convention held in the wigwag in Chicago in 1860 to nominate a Republican candidate for President, Lincoln had 231½ votes, two and a half more votes would give him the nomination. Before the result of the third ballot could be announced, Judge Carter of Cleveland, Chairman of the Ohio delegation, sprang on a chair and stretching out his arm to gain recognition said: "I rise to change 4 votes from Mr. Chase to Mr. Lincoln." Not many of you here today knew Judge Milton L. Clark of this city who lived on East Main Street and was a Judge of what is now called the Court of Appeals. Judge Clark was one of the delegates from Ohio to the Chicago Convention and one of the four delegates whose votes were changed from Chase to Lincoln. Judge Clark used to tell me that after his admission to practice law he made a tour of several Western States, among others Illinois, seeking a location for the practice of his profession and that, while he did not see or meet Lincoln, everywhere in Illinois he heard Lincoln so praised and commended that he formed a very favorable opinion of him and was eager to break away from Chase and cast his vote for the nomination of Lincoln. Thus our own city and a resident of it had an important part in Lincoln's nomination. So far as I know Lincoln was never in our city but he made a famous speech in Cincinnati soon after the Lincoln-Douglas campaign and a little later he spoke for more than 2 hours at the east



side of the State Capitol building, Columbus, standing near the spot marked by a bronze tablet placed a few years ago on the east wall of the Capitol building. At the exercises at the unveiling of this bronze tablet I shall never forget the pathos and emotion with which a great colored orator from Chicago said that the name of Lincoln was precious to him. But what shall I say to you about Lincoln? What shall I try to tell you about the man whom that iron man, Edwin M. Stanton said was the most perfect ruler of men the world has ever seen. In his oration over Caesar's dead body in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, Antony worked his hearers into a high state of sympathy by first holding up Caesar's cape and showing and commenting on the rents in it made by the daggers of his assassins. Then he threw aside the cape, exclaiming: "what weep you when you but behold our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here. Here is himself, marred as you see, with traitors." I have talked around my subject but have not said much about Lincoln as orator, statesman, humanist, emancipator, etc. As I have said, more than 5000 volumes have been written about Lincoln. In attempting to speak about Lincoln I find what everyone finds and what a recent author Joseph Newton Fort so well said: "It is not easy to speak of Lincoln calmly. He was a man of such high and tender humanity, of personality so appealing and pathos so melting, that almost every study of him ends in eulogy. He had no vanity, and being a man of humor he did not pose nor did he wish anyone to draw him other than as he was. But men can no more help loving and praising him than they can help loving and praising goodness anywhere." Lincoln has become for all peoples, everywhere, and for all time to come the apostle of human equality and liberty. The man who opened the door of opportunity to all; the man who



in his own life and career became and will forever remain the sublime example and ideal of the oppressed. To us here in free America the life and career of Lincoln is one of our most precious heritages. To a regiment of soldiers passing through Washington on their way to the front he said: "To the humblest and poorest among us are held out the highest privileges and positions. The present moment finds me in the White House, yet there is as good a chance for your child as there was for my father's." Some of Lincoln's statements are of interest in regard to problems we have before us now. He stood for equality of privilege among all classes and said: "The prudent, penniless beginner in the world labors for wages a while, saves his surplus with which to buy tools or land for himself, then labors on his own account and at length hires another to help him. This is the just and prosperous system which opens the way to all, gives hope to all and consequently an improvement of condition to all." He continually warned against violence and to a committee from the workingmen's Association of New York, he said: "The strongest bond of sympathy, outside the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, nor should this lead to a war on property or the owners of property. Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him labor diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring himself that his own will be safe from violence when built." He opposed paternalism in government and said: "The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot do so well in their individual capacities. In all that people can individually do



for themselves the government ought not to interfere." But I must not go on, much as I should like to. I have brought you only a few gems from the valley of diamonds Lincoln left for all of us. Familiarize yourselves with the life and character of this remarkable man. Tennyson never wrote truer words than the line: "I am a part of all I meet." Try to catch the spirit and vision of the man who wrote the Gettysburg address, the second inaugural and the letter to Mrs. Bixby. In that beautiful story: "The Great Stone Face" Hawthorne tells of the boy who lived in the valley from which the benign features of the great stone face were constantly in view and that this boy as he grew up and lived in that valley so often and reverently gazed on and studied it, that his neighbors discovered that his own features had grown to resemble those of the great stone face. Even if I cannot tell you any new facts about Abraham Lincoln, perhaps I can make the time one of profit to you by turning your attention and pointing to the imperishable figure of Lincoln. William H. Herndon, "Billy" as Lincoln called him, was his friend and law partner for 20 years and his summarization of Lincoln's character is generally agreed to be correct and is as follows: The great predominating elements of Lincoln's peculiar character were: First, his great capacity and power of reason; second, conscience and his excellent understanding; third, an exalted idea of the sense of right and equity; fourth, his intense veneration of the true and good. His conscience, his heart, and all the faculties and qualities of his mind bowed submissively to the despotisms of his reason.

Not only was he cautious, patient, and enduring; not only had he concentration and great continuity of thought, but he had profound analytical power. His vision was clear and he was the master



of statement. His pursuit of the truth was indefatigable. Truth is the power of reason, and Lincoln loved truth for its own sake. It was to him reason's food. His mind struggled for truth and his soul reached out for substance. He cared not for forms, ways, methods, the non-substantial things of this world. He did not have an intense care for any particular or individual man, the dollar, property, rank, orders, manners or similar things; neither did he have any avarice or other like vice in his nature. Neither was he a selfish man. He would never have performed an act, even to promote himself to the Presidency, if by that act, any human being was wronged. The universal testimony, "He is an honest man" gave him a firm hold on the masses and they trusted him with a blind, religious faith. His sad, melancholy face excited their sympathy and when the dark days came, it was their heart strings that entwined and sustained him. With the sympathy and love of the people, Lincoln had unlimited power over them. The trust and worship by the people of Lincoln were the result of his simple character. He held himself not aloof from the masses. He became one of them. They feared together, they struggled together; thus melted and moulded into one, they became one in thought, one in will, one in action. He seemed to throw a charm around every man who ever met him. To be in his presence was a pleasure, and no man ever left his company with injured feelings unless most richly deserved. I will close by quoting again from Joseph Fort Newton: "Our nation makes a wise choice of ideals when it pays tribute to Abraham Lincoln for that within him which we honor is the saving grace of the republic. On the distant slopes of fame we begin to see that homely, humorous, sad,



strong, tender, man as he was, and as few saw him while he lived. No one need fear that his real image will be lost in a haze or reverent and grateful memory for he becomes more real and unforgettable every year. There is no Lincoln myth. Fable falls away from his simple human majesty as we stand before his later portraits, looking into that great face, with its blend of light and shadow, its calm, level gaze so frank, so benign and, withal, so firm and farseeing. Nothing that unfolding time disclosed diminishes his noble, heroic, pathetic stature. Still and always when we look back at Lincoln and see him amidst the vicissitudes of his life, it is the man that we honor; a plain, honest, kindly man, sound of heart, full equally of pity and humor, caring much more to deserve praise than to possess it; rich in charity--one of the finest, rarest, truest souls now or ever to be a "citizen of eternity".

address

Judge Luther B. Yapple.  
Feb. 8 - 1938 - Ruwanis  
meeting Chillicothe Ohio.

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